# Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council safeguards e-government services with optimised storage environment

## Customer challenge

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea aims to create a better city life for residents. A number of recent initiatives, such as making more services available online and bringing a planning application scanning service back in-house, had put additional strain on the council's data storage environment, which was reaching end-of-life and maximum capacity.

## Computacenter solution

During the autumn of 2010 the council partnered with Computacenter to source, configure and integrate a new Storage Area Network (SAN) based on IBM XiV technology. The solution hosts 50 terabytes of data from nearly every council system, including email, intranet and e-government services. Storage is automatically allocated and data replicated in real time to minimise downtime.

## Results

The new storage platform has increased the availability of the council's data and online services. It also has the flexibility and scalability to support future transformation initiatives aimed at reducing costs and improving service quality. The council has already been able to achieve savings due to the solution's lower total cost of ownership and the IT team can now manage 50 per cent more data with less effort.

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
## KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

## Customer agenda

- Risk Avoidance
- Business Growth/Change

## Services

- Platform Migration
- Product Fulfilment Service

## Technology

**Hardware:**
IBM XiV Storage Area Network

**Software:**
VMware Site Recovery Manager

**Computacenter**
Services & Solutions

## Customer profile
### Making city life better

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is home to around 170,000 people as well as numerous educational and cultural institutions, including Imperial College, the Science Museum and the Natural History Museum.

The council is a unitary council responsible for providing more than 600 services, from waste disposal and education to housing and health. It has 3,500 employees located at 70 sites throughout the borough and is committed to making the area a cleaner, safer, healthier and more attractive place to live and work. Its overarching aim is to create 'a better city life'.

## Business challenge
### Managing increased data volumes from public service transformation

The council's service delivery framework is constantly evolving and improving – often thanks to the internet. In particular, transactional services such as paying council tax, renewing residents' parking permits and monitoring and commenting on planning applications, are increasingly being delivered via the web.

Other operational changes are also being applied as part of the government's focus on cost reduction. For example, the council recently brought its previously outsourced planning application scanning service back under internal management.

Although this initiative and the increase in online services has enabled significant cost savings, it has also resulted in a much larger quantity of data — all of which must be processed and stored by the council.

Barry Goodall, IT Support Manager at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, comments: "Numerous critical systems such as email and e-government services depend upon the availability of our data storage environment. Without email, many of the council's activities grind to a halt and internet downtime quickly becomes a political issue with councillors involved.

With the council's existing Storage Area Network (SAN) reaching end of life, the organisation needed to replace it quickly to prevent reliability issues. The legacy environment had served us well, but was running out of capacity and was time-consuming to manage," adds Barry.

To reduce the need for constant capital investment, the council also needed to find a more effective way to store its growing volumes of data. As Barry explains, "Services such as our planning application system create significant volumes of data, particularly with greater use of rich file formats such as high resolution jpegs. Even if application documents are supplied as hard copies, they are still scanned to digital format so add to our data storage requirements. For compliance purposes, much of our data has to be kept for several years."

> "The new platform helps us deliver public services more efficiently and with greater reliability."

Barry Goodall
IT Support Manager
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council

Computacenter
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## IT solution

### Intelligent and fail-safe data storage

To find a new storage solution and implementation partner, the council issued a tender in May 2010 under the Government Procurement Service (then called Buying Solutions) and evaluated responses based on numerous criteria, including price and quality.

"We eventually selected Computacenter's solution, which was based on IBM XiV technology," explains Barry. "The proposal combined best-of-breed hardware, software and services that would deliver the greatest value to the council."

The council decided to implement two IBM XiV SAN devices; the first at its Town Hall and the second at a disaster recovery site.

Computacenter worked closely with IBM to source, configure and integrate the solutions. This involved creating storage pools, configuring and assigning volumes, attaching hosts and configuring snapshots.

IBM and Computacenter also helped to set up the council's network for the migration of data from the legacy SAN to the new storage platform, working alongside council staff the entire time to enable knowledge transfer.

"Computacenter provided competent knowledgeable staff to ensure the implementation went as smoothly as possible," comments Barry. "We used the XiV's inbuilt capabilities to migrate the majority of the data from the legacy SAN, but when we came across challenges in migrating data from our virtual servers, the team quickly came up with an alternative solution based on VMware capabilities."

### Enabling data replication and simplified management

The council's SAN, which went live in March 2011, now hosts around 50 terabytes of data, including SQL databases, email, intranet, Internet and application-specific data across development and production environments. It seamlessly supports the council's 180-strong virtualised server estate.

All this data is synchronously mirrored to the council's secondary storage environment at a disaster recovery site. VMware Site Recovery Manager is used to manage this process for the organisation's 180 virtual servers. "In the event of a major incident at our primary site, we can failover to the secondary SAN at the click of a button with minimal downtime and no data loss," adds Barry.

The IBM XiV is particularly easy to administer. The solution automatically allocates storage optimised for best performance, while the management console provides complete visibility of system availability and performance.

"The IBM XiV's management console is very intuitive with a simple traffic light system that indicates the health of the system. Via the graphical user interface, we can drill through to verify how individual components are performing or identify the root cause of any issues," explains Barry.

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Barry Goodall
IT Support Manager
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council

## Results

### Managing more data with less resource to enable cost reduction

With an optimised storage environment, the council can safeguard the availability of the systems that underpin its public services. Barry comments: "The new SAN is simple to maintain, fast to respond, extremely reliable and offers greater automation."

This delivers a number of benefits, including:

**Improved access to council systems:** Since the storage solution was implemented, the council has experienced no planned or unplanned outages. The SAN not only offers exceptional performance, but also automated healing; when a disk fails, data is re-distributed to other disks with no downtime or loss of performance. This means that even if a problem occurs out of office hours there is no impact to the continuity of online services.

**Achieve more with less:** Thanks to greater automation and fewer issues, the council's IT team can now manage 50 per cent more data with less effort than previously, resulting in a lower total cost of ownership.

**Increased flexibility:** As more disk capacity is added to the SAN, more processing power and cache memory is also provisioned to prevent any impact to performance. As a result, the council can move more services online or bring outsourced capabilities inhouse and easily support the associated data overhead.

"By enabling us to meet the growing data storage needs of internal council departments, the new platform helps us deliver public services more efficiently and with greater reliability," concludes Barry.

## More resources

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